

APPROVED: Meeting No. 08-96

ATTEST: *Paula S. Jewell*

MAYOR AND COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND
Meeting No. 08-96

March 4, 1996

The Mayor and Council of Rockville, Maryland, convened in Worksession in the Council Chamber, Rockville City Hall, 111 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland, on March 4, 1996, at 7:33 p.m.

PRESENT

Mayor Rose G. Krasnow

Councilmember Robert E. Dorsey

Councilmember James T. Marrinan

Councilmember Glennon J. Harrison

ABSENT

Councilmember Robert T. Wright
(Due to Death In Family)

In attendance: City Manager Rick Kuckkahn and City Clerk Paula Jewell.

Also in attendance were Deputy City Manager Julia Novak, Finance Director Kevin Deckard, Budget Analysts Susan Fournier and Chris Freel, Public Information Officer Don Vandrey, Community Development Director Neal Herst, Personnel Director Rich Hajewski, Police Chief Terry Treschuk, Police Captain Mike England, and Recreation and Parks Director Burt Hall.

Re: Discussion of Policy Issues
Related To FY97 Budget Long-
Term Financial Planning

1. Water Utility - Consumption of water in the City reached its highest level in 1984. Since then, it has trended slightly downward, fluctuating from year to year based on precipitation patterns in the summer. The King Farm will be serviced by WSSC, but

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other development in the City over the next fifteen years may someday necessitate a capacity expansion. Since the debt service obligations associated with this will increase the water rate substantially, the City's goal is to time the expansion as closely as possible to the actual timing of the increase in demand.

The Mayor and Council discussed the issue. The usage is being monitored and when the trend starts staying up consistently, it will be time anticipate expansion. The City is still able to use WSSC water in an emergency such as when the recent intake valve structure broke down. The Mayor and Council agreed that staff should hold off on an expansion study at this time.

2. Golf Course - The City's golf course is a self-sustaining enterprise fund which has long enjoyed a prestigious reputation. Since the facility receives little formal policy attention, it has been included on this agenda, although no pressing policy issues exist.

Mayor Krasnow noted that the County was about to undertake a new golf course and she asked if this would hurt the City. Staff responded that it would not because the City's rates are competitive and the Redgate Golf Course tends to be over-subscribed during warmer weather.

3. Police Protection - KEY QUESTION - The Chief of Police will revisit the evolution of service demands on the municipal police force, as well as comment on likely future demands relating to the Town Center development and recent annexations. What

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are the Police Department's future staffing needs? What is the appropriate future role of the municipal police department relative to that of the County force?

The Mayor and Council discussed the Police Departments future staffing needs and what would be an appropriate future role of the Municipal Police Department relative to the County Force. Chief Treschuk noted that calls for service have consistently increased. Some of the future issues that the Police Department will have to deal with are annexation and population and building growth which will mean an increase in service calls. Chief Treschuk noted that there was an 18 to 24 month lead time to get an officer hired and trained. Police Department surveys have been positive; a major concern of respondents is that people don't see enough police cars in their neighborhoods. Chief Treschuk said that the reason for this is that the police cars may be somewhere else, e.g., handling calls for minor disturbances by youths. Mr. Treschuk noted that providing assistance to outside agencies is a policy issue that will have to be decided at some point. The Police Department is working closely with Community Services and the Recreation and Parks Department on youth outreach and many of the clients are the same. They are also working with other community agencies, for example, shelters.

Councilmember Marrinan asked about the status of the Federal Matching Grant Program. Staff responded that five grants were applied for and the City received an officer that had been on board for about one year, on an open-end contract basis.

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Rockville has been on the books for four additional officers when and if additional funding is available.

Councilmember Dorsey asked whether there was an opportunity to use police cadets or a youth core group to provide some of types of assistance needed. Chief Treschuk responded that this was possible and he noted that his department had recently taken advantage of a full-time, no cost victim witness advocate that promises to be an exciting new program. The Police Department has also implemented a program whereby a vehicle staffed by a volunteer, would be dispatched to assist drivers with breakdowns and lockouts.

Mayor Krasnow said that she was very pleased with what the Police Department was accomplishing; she noted that full police staffing for the City is a priority especially as the King Farm comes on-line. Councilmember Marrinan agreed that the City will have to add additional officers in the next year or two.

4. Swim Center - KEY QUESTION: It is often difficult to cover operating costs and capital improvement outlays with the revenues collected by the Swim Center. Should the City commit to tax subsidies to preserve the financial vitality of this enterprise fund?

The current yearly debt service is approximately \$150,000 which is provided by the general fund. The Mayor and Council need to see how many people use the Municipal Swim Center and, of those, how many of those users are Rockville

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residents. Staff is planning to present the 1996-97 fees schedule to the Mayor and Council at the March 11th general session.

5. Economic Development - KEY QUESTION: Is the economic development strategy consistent with the Mayor and Council's philosophy on how best to provide for a sound local economy?

Mayor Krasnow noted that the economic development plan did not give a step by step action plan for how each of the goals would be accomplished.

Councilmember Harrison said that some of the goals were on point, however, some such as strategy number six (Develop Tourism Activities) needed additional planning.

Councilmember Harrison said that he would like to see some justification as to why or what role local government has in promoting international trade.

Regarding strategy number eight (Promote the Retention of Business through the Corporate Visitation Program), Councilmember Marrinan asked what was the benefit of making "cold calls." Mayor Krasnow said that it might be interesting to see how the City of Fairfax handled promoting business retention. She said that the City should be able to work with the County on economic development. Councilmember Marrinan stressed the need for cooperating with the State and County, and he suggested that the City should explore possibilities of putting together its own economic development incentives policy like the County had done.

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Mayor Krasnow asked what type of protections were built into incentives to insure that the businesses didn't leave after a few years. She also said that a program to retrain displaced workers was needed and while the City could not necessarily sponsor this type of program, it was a needed service. Councilmember Harrison said that the Chamber of Commerce should give some thought to the idea as Chamber businesses will be the most affected by displaced workers.

Councilmember Marrinan expressed concern about the trend of businesses appealing their tax assessments. He noted that this was disturbing and he asked what could be done. He suggested that the issue needed exploring with the State, and staff needed to explore how to go about getting the law changed so that assessments were handled locally, and not on the State level, or would be handled by a third party. Mr. Marrinan suggested that staff explore some ramifications and to see how other states are handling this issue.

6. CIP/Bonding - The City is not planning to issue bonds this fiscal year however CIP programming will also keep to a minimum.

7. Tax Rate - KEY QUESTION: The City's assessment base has declined in recent years. Which is more critical: to maintain the current service package intact, or to preserve the \$.82 tax rate? If the answer is to preserve the tax rate, are there any thoughts about which services may be expendable?

The Mayor and Council expressed a desire to see a change in the fire

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hydrant service policy to have it come out of the water fund instead of the general fund. Councilmember Dorsey asked if the City had an incentive program to encourage employees to develop cost saving measures. Mr. Kuckkahn responded that the program was somewhat sporadic and it was not a monetary award; however, he said that employees were encouraged to come up with cost-saving measures. The City Manager was asked to list out those areas where the City privatized out for services.

8. Development/Density Vision - KEY QUESTION: Is the expressed vision of the City's development future in harmony with the view of the Mayor and Council?

Mr. Kuckkahn noted that two new staff members had been hired for the City Manager's Office that will be charged with providing manpower for different projects in the areas of development/density and vision. Density and transportation were two keys components that will be studied by the two new staff members.

9. Fee and Charges-Residents vs. Non-Residents - KEY QUESTION: Is the current fee structure effective in achieving the appropriate trade-offs between offering preferential treatment to residents and ensuring viability of programs by offering competitive rates to non-residents?

The City's philosophy is to sustain some competitiveness in the market. Councilmember Marrinan asked if it was worth marketing the idea of a set fee, and a discounted fee for residents. Mr. Hall agreed that this would be a good idea.

10. Infrastructure Maintenance - KEY QUESTIONS: (1) Should we change our standards for determining when road and sidewalk maintenance is required? (2) Should we change the materials used for road maintenance? (3) Should residents be able to obtain superior maintenance service if they are prepared to pay out of pocket for it?

Staff is looking at the standards for sidewalk maintenance as the City's standards may be too high and the intent is to relax this standard with the Mayor and Council's approval. Regarding road maintenance, staff is continuing with the smoothseal program. The materials used for road maintenance will not change. On the issue of residents paying out-of-pocket for superior maintenance services, Mayor and Council agreed that this would be troublesome to administer and it would become an issue of equity. Staff needs to begin compiling data of the streets which have been smoothsealed and when they are scheduled for maintenance.

11. Employees-Number vs. Pay - KEY QUESTIONS: The City has downsized considerably, with the current full-time equivalent work force at a level 8% less than five years ago. The prevailing philosophy has been to emphasize quality over quantity in our work force, ensuring attractive levels of pay but being somewhat tight on numbers of bodies. Is the Mayor and Council comfortable with this pattern of emphasis?

The City may have additional opportunities for downsizing this year. Quite a number of departments have been asking for additional personnel and Mr. Kuckkahn indicated that he will try to reassign and reallocate where needed; however, he was

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hesitant to approve any new positions. Mayor and Council expressed concerns about the need for Police Department staff and additional staff in the planning area.

12. Additional Issue For Discussion - Councilmember Harrison asked whether anyone had taken a look at the idea of a once-per-week trash pick-up. Mr. Kuckkahn responded that the return on this type of policy would be minimal and would not be worth implementing at this time.

Re: Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Mayor and Council, the Worksession was adjourned at 10:15 p.m., to reconvene in General Session on March 11, 1996, at 7:30 p.m.